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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for implementing a family day care conference are provided in this document. Contents range from the problem of selecting the conference location (including the city and the facility), to setting conference fees, promoting attendance, developing a conference program, and evaluating the conference. (Author/RH)

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IMPLEMENTING A STATE WIDE FAMILY DAY CARE CONFERENCE

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Abstract

Title

A detailed description of the organization, structure and implementation of a family day care conference is described. Suggestions for selecting and using human and non human resources are made so that comparable professionals in human service agencies could replicate the process.

IMPLEMENTING A STATE WIDE FAMILY DAY CARE CONFERENCE

Family day care providers can be located on farms, in most villages, and in all big cities. They often work eight to ten hours each day, five or six days a week and seldom have time for outside organizations. How then can they work together to solve mutual problems, share information and improve the quality of service they render each day to the children in their care and their communities? An annual family day care conference is useful in that it contributes to meeting those goals.

Getting Started

A few people can initiate the first conference if, among them they have the following resources:

- first hand knowledge of the family day care business
- ability to organize the program of a conference
- knowledge of facilities
- knowledge of funding opportunities
- ability to form and lead a group of people who may not readily agree with each other
- working relationships with relevant agencies
- knowledge of the state's organization and regulatory functions

Since most providers have not had the opportunity to develop in all of these areas, a combination of skilled providers, agency personnel, and representatives from an educational institution generally provide

the necessary human resources. Usually a larger planning group evolves as representatives of professional organizations, local 4C (Child Care Coordination Councils) groups, and local provider groups send representatives to planning sessions. The purpose of the planning group is to organize and present a program that is useful and needed by providers, to enhance the status of the family day care provider, and to communicate effectively to agency and educational personnel about the realities of providing care for children in a family day care home.

Working Together

For years the occupation of family day care frequently was given cursory attention or ignored by business, social agencies, and educational institutions. The contribution of providers to the care of the nation's children has gradually been recognized in the last decade. Many sectors of the society are just beginning to realize the importance of family day care to the overall economy of a region. Therefore, participation in a more highly visible and increasingly important activity such as a family day care state wide conference has become increasingly desirable not only for providers of care but also for agencies and educational institutions and organizations. Such involvement and sponsorship adds to their prestige. Competition for power or prestige was rather time consuming and difficult in the early stages of conference planning in New York and Michigan. Both groups solved the dilemma by encouraging multiple sponsorship. Any agency, organization, or institution could be listed as a sponsor if they donated money, services (typing, mailing), or people to work on the common goals.

Organizing the Planning of a Conference

An overall plan is necessary so that tasks may be completed in a timely fashion. A schedule was developed for a conference (Figure 1) held annually in April. This schedule was useful as it enabled planners to make decisions and to carry out actions within a time frame necessary for implementation of the conference. The planning group in this state sent one page flyers to all regulated providers and interested professionals and mailed programs only to those expressing interest. The planning group for each succeeding year was developed from volunteers identified on the program evaluation form of the preceding year.

Much of the work can be accomplished in committees (Figure 2) which may be formed so that they can meet in local areas between total group meetings held at the conference site. The work is not distributed evenly across the year but is more intense during the first three months.

Selecting a City and a Facility

The physical location of the conference determines, to a considerable extent, the regional distribution of people as well as the total number of persons who might attend. Providers tend to be concentrated in urban areas but are generally distributed across all counties in a State. If a conference is to attract rural and small town providers, it must be centrally located. If a smaller city is within two hours driving time of 90 percent of all providers, that location will attract a state wide audience. If the conference is located in the largest city where the largest numbers of providers live, it may become a city wide conference that is attended by a few providers from

SEPTEMBER

Select title and focus of Conference

Select Conference chairpersons and secretaries

Form Committees

Seek financial support

Request State social worker participation

OCTOBER

Program planning well under way

Budget discussed

Initial Flyer decided upon

Suggestions for Keynote and Luncheon speakers

Continue to work for financial

NOVEMBER

Program in final stages

Registration fee and other budget related items finalized for inclusion in program

Initial flyer to printer

Keynoter decided upon and contacted

DECEMBER

Program completed and prepared for printer

JANUARY

Flyers mailed

Workshop leaders suggested and contacts begun

Program to printer

Agencies contacted for display tables

FEBRUARY

Workshop leaders confirmed

Publicity begun

Hospitality planned

Personal responses to flyer

Worker participation finalized

MARCH

Programs mailed

Publicity continued

Hospitality continued

APRIL

Final conference details

CONFERENCE HELD

MAY

Discuss evaluations

Plan for September meeting

Identify next planning committee

Figure 1
FAMILY DAY CARE CONFERENCE PLANNING SCHEDULE

PROGRAM

Identify general areas of concern

Identify groups with special needs

Identify speakers

Determine format and length of sessions

Organize program based on full committee suggestions

HOSPITALITY

Arrange for and train hostesses

Prepare a direction sheet "what to do in case of" ...for hostesses

Arrange for a 'welcoming' climate

Plan rap groups and train leaders

Set up a speakers' room

Solicit and organize displays by providers and provider groups

Plan for and collect free materials for registration packets

PUBLICITY

Alert communities and providers throughout state to the conference

Identify all possible avenues for notifying the public (professional groups, newsletters, state day care checks, local agencies)

Prepare and distribute media releases

Design and distribute the advance flyer

FINANCE

Review financial records of previous year

Solicit donations

Prepare materials to request state moneys

Prepare budget

Coordinate budget plan with conference center

TOTAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Participate in program planning

Approve budget

Establish policy

Establish policy

Work at conference as resource people

Carry out the conference evaluation

Establish priorities based on evaluation

Figure 2
FAMILY DAY CARE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

surrounding areas. Ideally the conference would be most accessible if the largest city were also centrally located.

Public schools, hotels, junior colleges, and universities are common locations for conferences, though winterized camps, large churches, and other public buildings can successfully be used for smaller groups. The planning group needs to consider the following criteria when selecting a specific facility:

· Direct charges may be assessed for the use of meeting rooms. These are generally charged on one of two basis a dollar cost per person registered or an overall fee for the use of the facility that is paid in advance by the planning group.

· Indirect charges for meeting rooms are often hidden within the required luncheon of 200 or more at $15 or more per person. The price charged is developed by combining the cost of food, service, and use of facilities. Uninformed providers may evidence concern about the price paid for the value of the food alone.

· Services available to the planning group vary considerably among the facilities. Usually public school buildings, other public and agency buildings, camps and churches do not offer the planning group special services because conferences are not central to their primary function. Rooms to hold planning meetings, registration of participants, conference consultants, mass mailing services and assistance with publicity may be made available through institutions of higher education or city conference centers.

· Availability of acceptable low cost overnight accommodation, parking, and accessibility to a variety of restaurants should also be considered.

· Meeting rooms that are of appropriate size for the group and organized so that participants can move freely from one session to the next affect the participants level of involvement and enjoyment of the conference. Centrally located toileting facilities that are large, clean and accessible from meeting rooms are essential. Usually a conference group needs at least one large room for participants to meet together all at once.

The planning group must select a city and a facility early in the process. Costs for the provider should be considered including transportation, housing, food, and fees. Costs should also be considered for the planning group as well as during the planning process. Transportation, parking, child care, and restaurant lunches quickly add up to considerable expense.

Setting Conference Fees

The income of the typical family day care provider is quite low, and the very real costs of operating a conference are high. Only a combination of utilizing all available public resources, solicitation of donations, and voluntary contribution of members' time and energy can yield a high quality program at low or moderate costs.

The conference budget should contain the general categories listed in Figure 3. The greater the contributions made in service, goods, or money, the lower the cost to the individual provider. These contributions may be direct and obvious such as provision of AV equipment or payment of cash for some of the direct costs of the conferences. The state units associated with training and regulation in the welfare or social service division may provide substantial direct

Budget Categories	Supplied by state agency	Supplied by organization or private agency	Donated funds or time	Fees
Honoraria (payments to speakers for services)	X	X	X	X
Travel Expenses	(for employees)	(for employees)	(members of planning committee pay own expenses)	X
Guest Meals and Housing (for presenters)	(for employees)	(for employees)	(presenters expenses not covered by conference)	
Coffees and Reception	X		local businesses	X
Printing and Duplications (of programs and publicity materials)	X	(may contribute hand out materials for workshops given by employees)		X
Postage	(for sending registration materials)	(organization and planning minutes)	by committee members	X
Clerical-Mail Handling				X
Telephone (long distance)	X	X	X	X
Audio-Visual Equipment	loans often available	loans occasionally available		X
Supplies	X	Public Health & Cooperative Extension materials often free	Free materials may be donated	X
Fees for Facility	X (in part)			X
Miscellaneous				X

Figure 3
POTENTIAL SOURCE OF RESOURCES

funding through Title IVA or Title XX of the Social Security Act. This may take the form of service such as printing and mailing conference information. States vary considerably in internal organization. A member of the planning group should be a representative of a state agency who is knowledgeable about appropriate internal procedures. Six to seven months are often required to process the official request. In some states, direct funding may also be available through agencies under contract to the state such as 4C, family day care associations or training institutions. Occasionally, employers of large businesses who employ substantial numbers of women, or labor unions will contribute cash.

Indirect contributions from the state may be less obvious to providers. Conferences at some universities may be much less expensive than in commercial settings because the institution provides economic support through tax dollars for that purpose. Usually, state departments of mental health, or public health, or the Cooperative Extension Service provide speakers, films, and handout materials free of charge. Frequently, various agencies and organizations will pay the transportation expense of employees on the planning group or provide clerical and mailing services to the group during the planning process. State units may also pay registration fees, transportation, and expenses for employees attending the conference.

The distribution of sources of support for the annual Michigan Family Day Care Conference is presented in Table I. These percentages do not inlcude the personal time and expense contributed by planning group members or the indirect support of private and public agencies.

Program planners must balance goals with costs. Out of state

Table 1

ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR THE
MICHIGAN FAMILY DAY CARE CONFERENCE

YEAR	COST COVERED BY DONATIONS	COST COVERED BY STATE OF MICHIGAN	COST COVERED BY FEES
1977	24%*	43%	33%
1978	30%	50%	20%
1979	7%	53%	40%
1980	10%	55%	35%
1981	23%	less than 1%	77%

*Includes a donation from Day Care and Child Development Council which was later returned to the council.

speakers may be unrealistically expensive. Many resource persons will contribute their time and expenses if asked to do so, but not usually every year.

Fees, then, must be based on a realistic budget, firmly committed funding sources, and attendance, which must necessarily be estimated. A conservative estimate of two percent of all family day care providers in a state and three percent of the related professionals can be used reasonably for a first conference if there is adequate publicity. The cost per person goes down as the number of people attending is increased. The fee then is

$$\text{Fees} = \frac{\text{Total costs minus donated funds}}{\text{Estimate of attendance}}$$

Promoting Attendance

Locating a significant portion of the providers in a state is probably the most challenging task in recruiting participants. Even in those states, which, by law, regulate family day care homes, a significant population of providers do not comply and, therefore, are not recorded in a central computer. Therefore, in all states a combination of direct mailings, posters in public places (such as shopping malls, grocery stores and public schools), and personal contact are necessary. Most television and radio stations will make public announcements as well. All publicity should clearly indicate the audience, the program, the time, location, and a source for detailed information. If names and addressess of all providers who inquire about the conference are maintained over time a substantial mailing list of motivated providers can be gradually developed.

Community agencies and organizations may give support at the local

level. The cooperative extension agent, local welfare offices, local chapters of concerned organizations such as Child study clubs, Association for Childhood Education International, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Coordinated Child Care Councils, Day Care Council of America, and the Junior League are frequently willing to assist and support efforts to reach family day care providers.

Family day care providers attend conferences to learn how to manage their business affairs, to improve the quality of service and to share experiences with other providers. Therefore publicity and program should be aimed at meeting these needs directly.

Developing a Conference Program

A good conference must meet the needs of all participants. Therefore, a variety of program components related to the practical problems of operating a high quality family day care home must be developed. Topics such as business, health and safety, children's activities, parent-provider relationships, child development, foods and nutrition, management of time and other resource, family issues, and provider self-concept development issues are of continuing interest. Working providers are the best source of program ideas. The planning committee must select among a wide variety of suggestions, so that a balanced program can be developed.

Program planning is not static over time. Usually the first conference focuses on the personal needs of the provider and "how to do it." Concerns of providers who have participated a few years change toward an increasing focus on children's needs and are expressed in the

requests for indepth workshops on "why one does it" or child development. This flow continues to move outward with interest developing in the parents and families and finally in the larger community. The conference should have some sessions at each level (Figure 4) each year though the number of sessions at each level will vary. Remember that the provider who has attended conferences for five years is at a different level of development than a brand new provider.

Presenters should be knowledgeable in the topic, appreciative of the contributions of family day care, and acceptable to providers. Obviously many sessions can be led by competent providers. Presenters should be effective group leaders or teachers and have the ability to help providers feel competent and important to the community. Other presenters can be identified through the cooperative extension service, public and private agencies, and educational institutions. All presenters should fully comprehend the differences in caring for children in a large group setting and providing care in a small family environment.

Evaluating the Conference

The purposes for incorporating a written evaluation of the conference are: (1) determining some characteristics of the audience that actually attended, (2) identifying specific interests of providers, (3) gathering feedback for presenters, and (4) reporting to funding sources if necessary.

The development of the evaluation instrument should occur as an integral part of the planning process and should be designed to give needed information to the committee for the following year. Short,

Meeting the needs of all children and	Sample Sessions	Influencing state funding Regulating the regulators Impact of national economic policy on day care Women's Issues Quality FCD for all children
Meeting the needs of the families served	Sample Sessions	Supporting children through divorce Community resources for families Shared childrearing & problems of jealousy between provider and mother Cultural influence on daily habits
Meeting the needs of children receiving care	Sample Sessions	Child development 0-12 Discipline and Self Control Stimulating thinking in children Activities for mixed age groups
Meeting the basic needs of the provider	Sample Sessions	Budgeting Taxes Setting & Collecting fees Role of the provider Simple nutritious snacks Time and space management Blending roles of mother, wife provider Open rap sessions

Figure 4
ISSUES AND CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY
FAMILY DAY CARE PROVIDERS FOR RENDERING QUALITY SERVICE

direct questions designed to give specific information are easily understood and answered. Some indication of general satisfaction and suggestions for improvement can be elicited through open ended questions which are useful in gathering program ideas but the time involved in summarizing the answers is considerable. Many of these suggestions can be organized into three kinds of responses. The first and largest group are good ideas that can be implemented. The second group revolve around plans implemented in previous years or currently being tried out such as lengthening or shortening workshops. The third group of responses are virtually impossible to implement. One was to put the conference "on the road" and move it to two or three locations. Since 80 percent of all presenters pay their own expenses and volunteer their time this simply can't be implemented. Providers new to continuing adult education programs sometimes don't realize the very real limitations of the conference process.

Finally, the evaluation instrument can have a tear off section at the end where participants can sign up to be on the planning committee for the next conference. Broad participation is thereby encouraged.

Summary

Cooperation between family day care providers, private and public agency personnel, and educators is necessary if an annual conference is to be successfully implemented. Once the need for a state wide program is recognized, the various human, national, and monetary resources can be organized to implement a program that meets the needs of providers functioning at various levels of sophistication. The planning group that structures the work carefully to select an appropriate location, to

develop a meaningful program, and to set and manage fees can implement a conference to meet the needs of the participants. The final assessment of a state wide conference is the regular strong attendance of providers in succeeding years. The long range outcome of course is the improved quality of service rendered to the young children and their families.